

U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Virginia

Main Street Centre
600 E. Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219-2447

804/819-5400
Fax 804/771-2316

NEWS RELEASE

For Release: May 24, 2004
Richmond, Virginia

For more information contact:
Ann Helms (804) 819-5400

Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced a significant guilty plea today in a Project Exile case. Kelvin Cheatham, 27, of Richmond, Virginia, pled guilty to three counts of commercial robbery and three counts of using a firearm to commit the robberies. U.S. District Court Judge Richard L. Williams accepted the guilty plea and will sentence Cheatham on September 9, 2004, at 2:00 p.m.

On July 18, 2003, Cheatham robbed the Super 8 Motel on Midlothian Turnpike, in Chesterfield County, Virginia, of \$650. On July 23, he robbed the Comfort Inn on Oaklawn Boulevard, in Hopewell, Virginia, of \$206. He attempted to rob the Days Inn Hotel on Midlothian Turnpike, in Richmond, Virginia, on August 5; however, the clerk was unable to open the safe and Cheatham eventually left with no money. On each occasion, Cheatham was armed with a 9mm semi-automatic pistol, which he threatened to use to harm the clerk if he was not given money.

Cheatham faces a mandatory minimum term of 57 years on the firearms counts alone, and could face life in prison on these charges. The sentence on the gun charges, by law, must run consecutively to any term imposed for the robberies. Each robbery carries a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment. Cheatham will not be eligible for parole.

McNulty stated: "This case is an example of why Project Exile has been so successful. We have targeted a violent gun felon who will be removed or "exiled" from the community for a long time. Without doubt, Richmond is a safer place today as a result of this prosecution of a serial armed robber."

Project Exile is a multi-agency joint federal and state task force targeting armed criminals for prosecution for illegal possession or use of firearms. It is a part of Project Safe Neighborhoods, a nationwide effort by the Department of Justice aimed at reducing violent crimes.

Also announcing the conviction are Col. Andre Parker, Chief, Richmond Police Department; Col. Carl Baker, Chief, Chesterfield Police Department; Col. Edward Frankenstein, Chief, Prince George County Police Department; and John P. Malone, Special Agent in Charge, Washington Field Division, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives.

The case was investigated by agents of the ATF and officers of the Richmond, Chesterfield, and Prince George County Police Departments, and was prosecuted by Special Assistant United States Attorney and Assistant Virginia Attorney General Matthew C. Ackley.

###